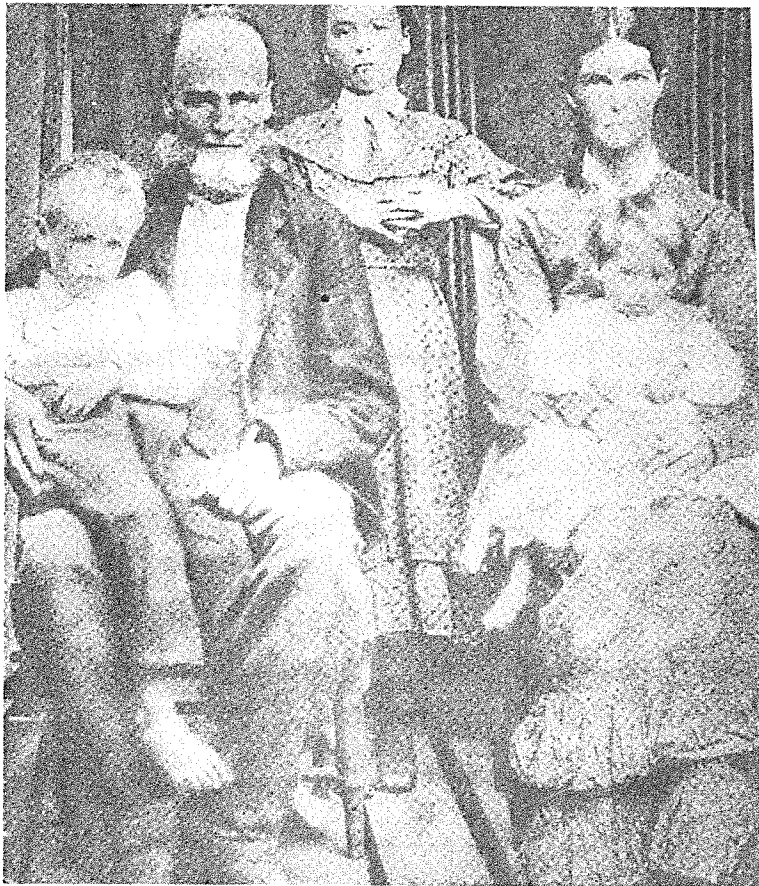


The Evening Star Shines Brightly—Evening Star Baptist Church
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By Joe Whitten

Evening Star Baptist Church has an interesting beginning, an interruption, and a new beginning, all of which evidences God's providence in one of His church. I find it a beautiful story of God's faithfulness in restoration.

Daniel Varderman family



Daniel S. Varderman is credited with the 1914 beginning of this church, for in the spring of that year he brought Rev. E. H. Grizzell to preach a revival in a brush arbor erected on Willis Merrill's property. After the revival ended, Willis and wife Rebecca donated 2 ¼ acres on which to erect a church house.

They had the building completed and in use by Summer 1914, but in the winter of the same year, a storm destroyed it. Determined to have a church, they rebuilt in the spring of 1915.

The 1915 building was 60x40 feet in dimensions, with 12 inch wide boards for flooring and 14 foot ceiling. The windows had shutters only, no glass, and seats were constructed of planks nailed to wooden blocks. Lighting came

from kerosene oil lanterns and lamps.

Family names making up the first members include, Mathis, Varderman, Perry, Macon, and Merrill.

Daniel Varderman named the church Evening Star. No reason is recorded for why he named it that, but perhaps he thought of the brightness of Venus lighting the darkening sky as evening draws down to night, and he saw a comparison of the church as a light in a dark world needing the light of the Gospel

A major interruption came in 1917 when, in the late summer of that year, the church had a “foot washing” ceremony—a ceremony many rural churches observed in those days. Something occurred which some members didn’t like. Whatever this was, major or minor, it caused the church to break up, and members started attending other churches.

The building remained vacant until 1920 when the community cleaned it up and used it as a school. The school continued until 1928.

Again the building stood stark and empty, though sometimes over the years it became a hay barn. Vines crept the landscape which flourished with weeds and briars. Even the well water at one point was contaminated.

One would think it impossible for a church ever to rise from such as this, or that the Water of God’s Word would flow again from its pulpit.

But in God’s time, it did!

In 1938, Rev. W. J. Bryan saw the need for a church to flourish again in that building, and he began to encourage the people to organize. The community responded by clearing the grounds around the church, restoring the lights and shutters, and cleaning the inside of the old church until it gleamed with welcome for worship services to begin.

Rev. Bryan preached one Sunday each month that summer, and one can imagine the old church building itself rejoicing in that it was a place of singing and worship once more.

In late summer 1938, Rev. John Goodman came and preached a revival that resulted the reorganizing of Evening Star Baptist Church. During this revival, twenty-two responded for baptism, two came on statement of faith and previous baptism, and two transferred membership from another church.

Records state that on August 7, 1938, the “...presbytery this day met duly and truly and scripturally reorganized Evening Star Church.”

The reorganization was successful, and the church has thrived for eighty years now. The present pastor is Shon Phillips and in 2017 the church reported a membership of 128.

The light of Evening Star Baptist Church did not go out, and it still casts a light of hope into a world that often seems to grow darker by the year. Light, however, shines most brilliantly in darkness. May Evening Star continue to glow.

[The information for this article came primarily from Pauline Macon who collected and wrote the history of Evening Star in 1982. This history is on file at the St. Clair Baptist Association office in Asheville. This fine little history of the church lists pastors, along with their accomplishments and photographs, from 1938 to 1982. Thank you, Pauline Mason, for researching and writing this history.]